United Nations CEDAW/C/SR.1470

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
15 February 2017

English only

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-sixth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 1470th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 13 February 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Hayashi

later: Ms. Leinarte

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-sixth session of the Committee.

Statement by the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

2. **Mr. Nowosad** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the new Secretary-General of the United Nations had pledged to respect gender parity in his appointments to senior management positions and to achieve full gender parity at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels by the end of his mandate.

3. The Committee's work on strengthening the linkages between its mandate and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular its advocacy of mainstreaming women's rights and gender equality across all the Goals and targets, served as an example for other treaty bodies. He welcomed its plan to prepare a gender-focused submission on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity for the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development and its efforts to refine the methodology for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.1.1, in cooperation with OHCHR.

4. In November 2016 the President of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly had highlighted the interdependence between human rights, including women's rights, and the Sustainable Development Goals. While Governments had the primary responsibility for meeting the Goals, the United Nations had an important supporting role to play. The President had therefore devised a three-track implementation strategy that involved raising awareness of the importance of the Goals' implementation, strengthening momentum and supporting the efforts of the United Nations and its agencies.

5. Global instability, exemplified by the ongoing large-scale movement of migrants and refugees, hindered the implementation of the Goals and increased the incidence of gender discrimination and violations of women's rights. The principles enshrined in the Convention, as well as the Committee's guidance, were therefore all the more vital. Linking the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the Convention, which had been ratified by nearly all States and provided comprehensive protection for women's rights, would significantly enhance support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. The first biennial report of the Secretary-General on the status of the human rights treaty body system (A/71/118) detailed how the treaty body strengthening process under General Assembly resolution 68/268 had successfully addressed some of the system's most pressing issues, although working methods could be further harmonized. In response, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 71/185, which reflected a unified approach to procedural and managerial matters concerning the various treaty bodies.

7. Later in 2017 the General Assembly would decide whether to grant the necessary resources for the requested meeting time for the 2018-2019 biennium. The meeting time had been recalculated on the basis of the mathematical parameters outlined in General Assembly resolution 68/268. Once the General Assembly began to act on those parameters, it would confirm a quasi-automatic mechanism for funding the treaty body system based on expected workload, thus allowing for greater sustainability and predictability. The temporary increase in meeting time to enable the treaty bodies to address their backlogs would end after the current biennium, meaning that the Committee's allocated meeting time would return to 14 weeks in the next biennium.

8. Despite that reduction, OHCHR was committed to providing the support required by the Committee to clear its backlog and conduct inquiries under article 8 of the Optional Protocol. The Office had established an extranet page containing key documents, templates and guidelines for facilitating the treaty bodies' work on inquiries.

9. Recently one Committee member, Ms. Patten, had participated in a Security Council Arria-formula meeting on the synergies between the Convention and Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security. She had been the first treaty body member in history to address the Security Council and had briefed it on how general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations could assist Member States in monitoring the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and other resolutions on women and peace and security. Several Member States had expressed support for a resolution or presidential statement calling for more synergies between the Committee and the Security Council.

10. In December 2016, the General Assembly had adopted a series of resolutions relating to women's rights, including resolution 71/175 on child, early and forced marriage. That resolution made reference to the Convention and called on States to address gender stereotypes that contributed to the continued existence of those phenomena and to amend laws that enabled perpetrators of rape, sexual abuse or abduction to escape punishment by marrying their victims. It also urged Governments to ensure victims' access to justice, education and sexual and reproductive health. Moreover, the General Assembly had rejected proposals to defer action on Human Rights Council resolution 32/2 and had thereby endorsed the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, who would present his first report in June 2017.

Solemn declaration by new and re-elected members of the Committee

11. *Ms. Ameline, Mr. Bergby, Ms. Bethel, Ms. Gbedemah, Ms. Haidar, Ms. Leinarte, Ms. Manalo, Ms. Nwankwo, Ms. Rana, Ms. Song and Ms. Verges made the solemn declaration provided for in rule 15 of the Committee's rules of procedure.*

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/66/1)

12. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the sixty-fifth and sixty-sixth sessions of the Committee

13. **The Chair** said that the number of States parties to the Convention and the Optional Protocol remained at 189 and 106, respectively. The number of States that had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention was also unchanged, at 71. Four States parties had submitted their periodic reports since the beginning of the last session.

14. In December 2016 she and Ms. Gbedemah had attended the World Assembly for Women, held in Tokyo, where she had briefed participants on the Committee's work, particularly its general recommendation No. 30. In February 2017, she and several other Committee members had attended the second expert group meeting on the draft update of general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women, held at the Centre for Women, Peace and Security of the London School of Economics and Political Science. The participants had incorporated amendments based on submissions from various stakeholders and had drawn upon the expertise of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and of external experts. While at the Centre, she had also given a presentation on the Convention and the treaty body strengthening process.

15. The Canadian Parliament's Standing Committee on the Status of Women had invited her to a hearing on the economic empowerment of Canadian women in the light of the Committee's concluding observations on Canada, adopted at its previous session. Owing to prior commitments, she had asked that the hearing should be postponed and that arrangements should be made to allow her to participate remotely.

16. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she had given two presentations in Thailand in December 2016. The first had taken place at a strategic consultation on the global response to the issue of violence against women, at which she had put forward the Committee's views, in particular in light of a discussion that had arisen on whether another treaty body was required. The second presentation had been given at a regional consultation on women migrant workers, at which she had provided information on the Committee's jurisprudence and on general recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers.

17. Also in December, she had travelled to Japan at the invitation of the Government and had given two talks, one on women, peace and security and one on problems affecting women in Africa and the relationship between those problems and issues in Japan. She had given a talk to a class studying international law at Saint Andrew's University, in which she had focused on the issue of employment and the impact of the Committee's concluding observations. Lastly, at the headquarters of the World Health Organization in Geneva, she had attended a meeting of the high-level working group on health and human rights of women, children and adolescents.

18. **Ms. Ameline** said that it was essential to promote the implementation of national security plans in conflict areas, given the current large-scale refugee problem. Ms. Patten's initiative to establish links with the Security Council was especially important in that regard. She agreed that the Sustainable Development Goals should play an increasingly important part in the Committee's deliberations and actions, and the work carried out in that regard by Ms. Haidar should continue. Lastly, she welcomed the increasingly important contributions being made by civil society at a time when the rule of law sometimes appeared to be under threat.

19. **Ms. Acar** said that good progress was being made on the draft update of general recommendation No. 19, which would be presented to the Committee for its consideration during the session. In October 2016, she had chaired the eighth meeting of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The participants had discussed the possibility of enhancing cooperation between the Group and the Committee and had reviewed reports submitted by the Governments of Monaco and Austria.

20. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that, in December 2016, she and Ms. Schulz had been invited to participate in a dialogue between civil society organizations and Committee members on the international responsibilities of national and international corporations. Fruitful discussions had taken place on the role played by non-State actors and the impact of transnational trade agreements on women's rights and human rights in general.

21. **Ms. Haidar** said that she, Ms. Patten and Ms. Pomeranzi had attended a joint expert meeting, organized by OHCHR and UN-Women, on issues surrounding migrant women, particularly in the context of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration that was being prepared in response to the call issued by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/1. In January 2017, she had attended a round-table meeting in New York on migrant women, together with the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice. In the same month, and in the same city, she had attended a meeting to follow up on the joint expert meeting held in Geneva at which the global compact had been discussed. Lastly, she too had attended the second expert group meeting on the draft update of general recommendation No. 19.

22. **Ms. Schulz** said that she had taken part in the meeting on human rights and corporate accountability that had previously been mentioned by Ms. Acosta Vargas. At that meeting, she had been impressed by the role being played by non-governmental organizations in protecting women's rights and human rights in general. The discussions had clearly shown that civil society played a significant part in campaigning to protect human rights against the activities of corporations. At the same meeting, she had also participated in a discussion on how the Convention could be used to protect women whose rights were adversely affected by business activities.

23. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that she had attended a conference on the challenges encountered in efforts to include women in national and regional development programmes. At that conference, she had spoken about the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women, the importance of articles 11 and 40 of the Convention and the recommendations most frequently made in the Committee's concluding observations. She had also attended an international conference on trafficking in women, male and female prostitution and related issues. In the context of that discussion, she had spoken about article 6 of the Convention and had given examples of the main recommendations made in that area by the Committee.

24. **Ms. Patten** said that the two meetings on women migrant workers that she had attended with Ms. Haidar had resulted in the formulation of specific recommendations to ensure that the global compact would be very gender-sensitive. In addition, as previously mentioned, she had spoken on behalf of the Committee at a special Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council at which all the members in attendance, as well as many States parties, had expressed support for the proposal to use the Convention to reinforce Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security. The Committee's recommendation that States parties to the Convention should report on their implementation of Security Council resolutions had been supported, as had the idea that the exceptional reporting procedure should be used to enhance the synergies between the Committee and the women and peace and security agenda.

25. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that in Israel a new scheme had been launched to enhance cooperation between civil society and the Government during the preparation of reports for treaty bodies. Following a visit by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, a conference had been held on the ratification by Israel of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), and a meeting with members of civil society had been convened to prepare information for submission to the Special Rapporteur.

26. **Ms. Chalal** said that an interministerial committee had invited her to give a presentation on the Convention and the work of the Committee. She had also attended an event organized by the national human rights council of Algeria on the conditions of women detainees, as well as a meeting with the Algerian branch of Amnesty International on sub-Sarahan women migrants.

27. **Ms. Gabr** said that, having chaired the working group that had drafted general recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women, she had striven to highlight the importance of that recommendation, particularly as the majority of women in Egypt lived in rural areas. The text of the general recommendation had been submitted to the African Union, the League of Arab States and the National Council for Women. She had also given courses on women's rights, migration and trafficking in persons at the Cairo Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa. Moreover, she had given interviews on Egyptian radio and television and had published a number of articles in journals.

The public part of the meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.

Election of officers

28. **Ms. Sarugaser** (Acting Secretary of the Committee) said that Ms. Leinarte had been elected as Chair of the Committee. In addition, Ms. Nwankwo, Ms. Halperin-Kaddari and Ms. Arocha Domínguez, as candidates from an African State, a Western European or other State and a Latin American or Caribbean State, respectively, had been elected as Vice-Chairs. Ms. Manalo, as a candidate from an Asia-Pacific State, had been elected as Rapporteur.

29. *Ms. Leinarte took the Chair.*

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

30. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that the pre-sessional working group for the sixty-sixth session had met in July 2016 and had prepared lists of issues and questions in relation to the reports of El Salvador, Germany, Jordan, Micronesia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Ukraine. It had also, on a pilot basis, prepared a list of issues prior to the submission of the sixth periodic report of Israel under the optional simplified reporting procedure. That report was due to be considered at the sixty-eighth session of the Committee.

31. In preparing the lists of issues and questions, the pre-sessional working group had considered the reports of all the States parties she had mentioned except Israel, in addition to their core documents, the general recommendations adopted by the Committee, and other relevant documents and information. Consideration had also been given to written and oral information from entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions. The lists of issues and questions adopted by the pre-sessional working group had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

32. **Ms. Gbedemah**, speaking as the alternate Rapporteur on follow-up, said that she and Ms. Zou had met with and received positive responses from representatives of the Comoros. At the end of the sixty-fifth session, follow-up letters outlining the outcome of assessments of follow-up reports had been sent to Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Qatar, Serbia and Zimbabwe. First reminders regarding overdue follow-up reports had been sent to India, Lithuania, Mauritania and Swaziland. A second reminder regarding an overdue follow-up report had been sent to Benin. The Committee had received follow-up reports from Andorra, Belgium, Cameroon, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Iraq, Jamaica, Lithuania, Peru and Seychelles. She invited the country rapporteurs for Cameroon and Seychelles to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports of those countries and called for volunteers to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports sent by Andorra, Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Iraq, Jamaica, Lithuania and Peru. During the current session, first reminders regarding the submission of follow-up reports should be sent to Brunei Darussalam, Ghana, Guinea, Poland, Solomon Islands, Uganda and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). A second reminder should be sent to Sierra Leone. A meeting should be scheduled with representatives of Cabo Verde, the Central African Republic and the Congo.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 12.05 p.m.